اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer

Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah Al-Ikhlas (The Unity) -112

سُوْرَةُ الْاِخْلَاصِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate**)**

قُلْ هُوَ اللّٰهُ اَحَدٌ ۝١

(112:1) Say: (1) “He is Allah, (2) the One and Unique; (3)

(1) The first addressee of this command is the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself for it was he who was asked: Who is your Lord and what is He like. Again it was he who was commanded to answer the question in the following words. But after him every believer is its addressee. He too should say what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been commanded to say.

(2) That is, my Lord to Whom you want to be introduced is none but Allah. This is the first answer to the questions, and it means: I have not introduced a new lord who I want you to worship beside all other gods, but it is the same Being you know by the name of Allah. Allah was not an unfamiliar word for the Arabs. They had been using this very word for the Creator of the universe since the earliest times, and they did not apply this word to any of their other gods. For the other gods they used the word ilah. Then their beliefs about Allah had become fully manifest at the time Abraha invaded Makkah. At that time there existed 360 idols of gods (ilahs) in and around the Kabah, but the polytheists forsaking all of them had invoked only Allah for protection. In other words, they knew in their hearts that no ilah could help them on that critical occasion except Allah. The Kabah was also called Bait-Allah by them and not Baitilahs after their self-made gods. At many places in the Quran the polytheistic Arabian belief about Allah has been expressed, thus:

In Surah Az-Zukhruf it has been said: If you ask them who created them, they will surely say, Allah. (Verse 87).

In Surah Al-Ankabut: If you ask them, who has created the earth and the heavens and who has subjected the moon and the sun. They will surely say: Allah. And if you ask them, who sent down rainwater from the sky and thereby raised the dead earth back to life. They will surely say: Allah. (Verses 61-63).

In Surah Al-Muminun: Say to them, tell me, if you know, whose is the earth and all who dwell in it. They will say, Allah's. Say to them: To whom do the seven heavens and the Glorious Throne belong. They will say: To Allah. Say to them: Tell me, if you know, whose is the sovereignty over everything. And who is that Being who gives protection while none else can give protection against Him. They will surely reply: This power belongs to Allah. (Verses 84-89).

In Surah Younus: Ask them: Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth. Who has power over the faculties of hearing and sight. Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. Who directs the system of the universe. They will surely reply: Allah. (Verse 31).

Again in Surah Younus at another place: When you set sails in ships, rejoicing over a fair breeze, then all of a sudden a strong wind begins to rage against the passengers and waves begin to surge upon them from every side and they realize that they have been encircled by the tempest. At that time they pray to Allah with sincere faith, saying: If you deliver us from this peril, we will become Your grateful servants. But when He delivers them, the same people begin to rebel on the earth against the truth. (Verses 22-23).

The same thing has been reiterated in Surah Bani Isra'il, thus: When a misfortune befalls you on the sea, all of those whom you invoke for help fail you but He (is there to help you), yet when He brings you safe to land, you turn away from Him. (Verse 67).

Keeping these verses in view, let us consider that when the people asked: Who is your Lord and what is He like to Whom service and worship you call us. The answer given was Huwa Allah: He is Allah. This answer by itself gives the meaning: My

Lord is He whom you yourself acknowledge as your own as well as the whole world's Creator, its Master, Sustainer and Administrator, and He whom you invoke for help at critical times beside all other deities, and I invite you to His service alone. This answer comprehends all the perfect and excellent attributes of Allah. Therefore, it is not at all conceivable that the Creator of the universe, its Administrator and Disposer of its affairs, Sustainer of all the creatures living in it, and the Helper of the servants in times of hardship, would not be living, hearing and seeing, that He would not be an All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All- Wise, All-Merciful and All-Kind Sovereign.

(3) The scholars have explained the sentence Huwa-Allahu Ahad syntactically, but in our opinion its explanation which perfectly corresponds to the context is that Huwa is the subject and Allahu its predicate, and Ahad-un its second predicate. According to this parsing the sentence means: He (about Whom you are questioning me) is Allah, is One and only one. Another meaning can also be, and according to language rules it is not wrong either: He is Allah, the One.

Here, the first thing to be understood is the unusual use of ahad in this sentence. Usually this word is either used in the possessive case as yaum ul-ahad (first day of the week), or to indicate total negative as Ma jaa a-ni ahad-un (No one has come to me), or in common questions like Hal indaka ahadun (Is there anyone with you), or in conditional clauses like Injaa-ka ahad-un (If someone comes to you), or in counting as ahad, ithnan, ahad ashar (one, two, eleven). Apart from these uses, there is no precedent in the pre-Quranic Arabic that the mere word ahad might have been used as an adjective for a person or thing. After the revelation of the Quran this word has been used only for the Being of Allah, and for no one else. This extraordinary use by itself shows that being single, unique and matchless is a fundamental attribute of Allah; no one else in the world is qualified with this quality: He is One, He has no equal.

Then, keeping in view the questions that the polytheists and the followers of earlier scriptures asked the Prophet (peace be

upon him) about his Lord, let us see how they were answered with ahad-un after Huwa-Allah.

First, it means: He alone is the Sustainer: no one else has any share or part in providence and since He alone can be the Ilah (Deity) Who is Master and Sustainer, therefore, no one else is His associate in Divinity either.

Secondly, it also means He alone is the Creator of the universe: no one else is His associate in this work of creation. He alone is the Master of the universe, the Disposer and Administrator of its system, the Sustainer of His creatures, Helper and Rescuer in times of hardship; no one else has any share or part whatever in the works of Godhead, which as you yourselves acknowledge, are works of Allah.

Thirdly, since they had also asked the questions: Of what is your Lord made? What is His ancestry? What is his sex? From whom has He inherited the world and who will inherit it after Him? All these questions have been answered with one word ahad for Allah. It means:

(1) He alone has been, and will be, God forever; neither was there a God before Him, nor will there be any after Him.

(2) There is no race of gods to which He may belong as a member: He is God, One and Single, and none is homogeneous with Him.

(3) His being is not merely One (wahid but ahad, in which there is no tinge of plurality in any way:

He is not a compound being, which may be analyzable or divisible, which may have a form and shape, which may be residing somewhere, or may contain or include something, which may have a color, which may have some limbs, which may have a direction, and which may be variable or changeable in any way. Free from every kind of plurality He alone is a Being who is Ahad in every aspect. (Here, one should fully understand that the word wahid is used in Arabic just like the word one in English. A

collection consisting of great pluralities is collectively called wahid or one, as one man, one nation, one country, one world, even one universe, and every separate part of a collection is also called one. But the word Ahad is not used for anyone except Allah. That is why wherever in the Quran the word wahid has been used for Allah, He has been called Ilah wahid (one Deity), or AllahulWahid-al-Qahhar (One Allah Who is Omnipotent), and nowhere just wahid, for this word is also used for the things which contain pluralities of different kinds in their being. On the contrary, for Allah and only for Allah the word Ahad has been used absolutely, for He alone is the Being Who exists without any plurality in any way, Whose Oneness is perfect in every way.

اَللّٰهُ الصَّمَدُ ۲

(112:2) Allah, Who is in need of none and of Whom all are in need; (4)

(4) The word used in the original is samad of which the root is smd. A look at the derivatives in Arabic from this root will show how comprehensive and vast this word is in meaning. (Lexical discussion of the meanings of the derivatives is omitted).

On the basis of these lexical meanings the explanations of the word as-Samad in the verse Allah-us-Samad, which have been reported from the companions, their immediate successors and the later scholars are given below:

Ali, Ikrimah and Kab Ahbar: Samad is he who has no superior.

Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas and Abu Wail Shaqiq bin Salamah: The chieftain whose chieftaincy is perfect and of the most extraordinary kind.

Another view of Ibn Abbas: Samad is he to whom the people turn when afflicted with a calamity. Still another view of his: The chieftain who in his chieftaincy, in his nobility and glory, in his

clemency and forbearance, in his knowledge and wisdom is perfect.

Abu Hurairah: He who is independent of all and all others are dependent upon him.

Other views of Ikrimah: He from whom nothing ever has come out, nor normally comes out, who neither eats nor drinks. Views containing the same meaning have been related from Shabi and Muhammad bin Kab al-Kurazi also.

Suddi: The one to whom the people turn for obtaining the things they need and for help in hardships.

Saeed bin Jubair: He who is perfect in all his attributes and works.

Rabi bin Jubair: He who is immune from every calamity.

Muqatil bin Hayyan: He who is faultless.

Ibn Kaysan: He who is exclusive in his attributes.

Hasan Basri and Qatadah: He who is ever-living and immortal. Similar views have been related from Mujahid, Mamar and Murrat alHamadani also.

Murrat al-Hamadani's another view is: He who decides whatever he wills and does whatever he wills, without there being anyone to revise his judgment and decision.

Ibrahim Nakhai: He to whom the people turn for fulfillment of their desires.

Abu Bakr al-Anbari: There is no difference of opinion among the lexicographers that samad is the chief who has no superior and to whom the people turn for fulfillment of their desires and needs and in connection with other affairs. Similar to this is the view of Az-Zajjaj, who says Samad is he in whom leadership has been perfected, and to whom one turns for fulfillment of his needs and desires.

Now, let us consider why Allahu-Ahad has been said in the first sentence and why Allah-us-Samad in this sentence. About the word ahad we have explained above that it is exclusively used for Allah, and for none else. That is why it has been used as ahad, in the indefinite sense. But since the word samad is used for creatures also, Allall-us-Samad has been said instead of Allah Samad, which signifies that real and true Samad is Allah alone. If a creature is samad in one sense, it may not be samad in some other sense, for it is mortal, not immortal; it is analyzable and divisible, is compound, its parts can scatter away any time; some creatures are dependent upon it, and upon others it is dependent; its chieftaincy is relative and not absolute; it is superior to certain things and certain other things are superior to it; it can fulfill some desires of some creatures but it is not in the power of any creature to fulfill all the desires of all the creatures, On the contrary, Allah is perfect in His attributes of Samad in every respect; the whole world is dependent upon Him in its needs, but He is not dependent upon anyone; everything in the world turns to Him, consciously or unconsciously, for its survival and for fulfillment of the needs of everyone; He is Immortal and Ever-living; He sustains others and is not sustained by anyone; He is Single and Unique, not compound so as to be analyzable and divisible; His sovereignty prevails over entire universe and He is Supreme in every sense. Therefore, He is not only Samad but As-Samad, i.e. the Only and One Being Who is wholly and perfectly qualified with the attribute of samad in the true sense.

Then, since He is As-Samad, it is necessary that He should be Unique, One and Only, for such a being can only be One, which is not dependent upon anyone and upon whom everyone else may be dependent; two or more beings cannot be self-sufficient and fulfillers of the needs of all. Furthermore, His being As-samad also requires that He alone should be the Deity, none else, for no sensible person would worship and serve the one who had no power and authority to fulfill the needs of others.

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَ لَمْ يُ ۥولَدْ ۝٣

(112:3) He neither begot any nor was He begotten, [5]

(5) The polytheists in every age have adopted the concept that like men, gods also belong to a species, which has many members and they also get married, beget and are begotten. They did not even regard Allah, Lord of the universe, as supreme and above this concept of ignorance, and even proposed children for Him. Thus, the Arabian belief as stated in the Quran was that they regarded the angels as daughters of Allah. The Prophetic communities too could not remain immune from this creed of paganism. They too adopted the creed of holding one saintly person or another as son of God. Two kinds of concepts have always been mixed up in these debasing superstitions. Some people thought that those whom they regarded as Allah's children, were descended from him in the natural way and some others claimed that the one whom they called son of God, had been adopted by Allah Himself as a son. Although they could not dare call anyone as, God forbid, father of God, obviously human mind cannot remain immune against such a concept that God too should be regarded as a son of somebody when it is conceived that He is not free from sex and procreation and that He too, like man, is the kind of being which begets children and needs to adopt a son in case it is childless, That is why one of the questions asked of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was: What is the ancestry of Allah, and another was: From whom has He inherited the world and who will inherit it after Him.

If these assumptions of ignorance are analyzed, it becomes obvious that they logically necessitate the assumption of some other things as well.

First, that God should not be One, but there should be a species of Gods, and its members should be associates in the attributes, acts and powers of Divinity. This not only follows from assuming God begetting children but also from assuming that He has adopted someone as a son, for the adopted son of somebody can inevitably be of his own kind. And when, God forbid, he is of

the same kind as God, it cannot be denied that he too possesses attributes of Godhead.

Second, that the children cannot be conceived unless the male and the female combine and some substance from the father and the mother unites to take the shape of child. Therefore, the assumption that God begets children necessitates that He should, God forbid, be a material and physical entity, should have a wife of His own species, and some substance also should issue from His body.

Third, that wherever there is sex and procreation, it is there because individuals are mortal and for the survival of their species it is inevitable that they should beget children to perpetuate the race. Thus, the assumption that God begets children also necessitates that He should, God forbid, Himself be mortal, and immortality should belong to the species of Gods, not to God Himself. Furthermore, it also necessitates that like all mortal individuals, God also, God forbid, should have a beginning and an end. For the individuals of the species whose survival depends upon sex and procreation neither exist since eternity nor will exist till eternity.

Fourth, that the object of adopting some one as a son is that a childless person needs a helper in his lifetime and an heir after his death. Therefore, the supposition that Allah has adopted a son inevitably amounts to ascribing all those weaknesses to His sublime Being which characterize mortal man.

Although all these assumptions are destroyed as soon as Allah is called and described as Ahad and As-Samad, yet when it is said: Neither has He an offspring nor is He the offspring of another, there remains no room for any ambiguity in this regard. Then, since these concepts are the most potent factors of polytheism with regard to Divine Being, Allah has refuted them clearly and absolutely not only in Surah Al-Ikhlas but has also reiterated this theme at different places in different ways so that the people may understand the truth fully. For example let us consider the following verses:

Allah is only One Deity: He is far too exalted that He should have a son: whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth belongs to Him. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 171).

Note it well: they, in fact, invent a falsehood when they say, Allah has children. They are utter liars. (Surah As-Saffat, Ayats 151-152).

They have invented a blood-relationship between Allah and the angels, whereas the angels know well that these people will be brought up (as culprits). (Surah As-Saffat, Ayat 158).

These people have made some of His servants to be part of Him. The fact is that man is manifestly ungrateful. (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 15).

Yet the people have set up the Jinn as partners with Allah, whereas He is their Creator; they have also invented for Him sons and daughters without having any knowledge, whereas He is absolutely free from and exalted far above the things they say. He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth: how should He have a son, when He has no consort? He has created each and every thing. (Surah Al-Anam, Ayats 100-101).

They say: the Merciful has offspring. Glory be to Allah! They (whom they describe as His offspring) are His mere servants who have been honored. (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 26).

They remarked: Allah has taken a son to himself. Allah is All-pure: He is Self Sufficient. He is the Owner of everything that is in the heavens and the earth. Have you any authority for what you say? What, do you ascribe to Allah that of which you have no knowledge. (Surah Younus, Ayat 68).

And (O Prophet) say: Praise is for Allah who has begotten no son nor has any partner in His Kingdom nor is helpless to need any supporter. (Surah Bani Isra'il, Ayat 111).

Allah has no offspring, and there is no other deity as a partner with Him. (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 91).

In these verses the belief of the people who ascribe real as adopted children to Allah, has been refuted from every aspect, and its being a false belief has also been proved by argument. These and many other Quranic verses of the same theme further explain Surah Al-Ikhlas.

وَ لَمۡ یَکُنۡ لَّہٗ کُفُوًا اَحَدٌ ۴

(112:4) and none is comparable to Him.” (6)

(6) The word kufu as used in the original means an example, a similar thing, the one equal in rank and position. In the matter of marriage, kufu means that the boy and the girl should match each other socially. Thus, the verse means that there is no one in the entire universe, nor ever was, nor ever can be, who is similar to Allah, or equal in rank with Him, or resembling Him in His attributes, works and powers in any degree whatever.